One of the characteristics of Taoism is the means which it prescribes for the achievement of immortality. Here Taoism has been much like Buddhism. Primitive Buddhism could hold out hope for salvation only to those who followed the rigorous road of the arhat. Taoism, too, in earlier days offered blissful immortality only to those select few who were willing to pursue the exacting course necessary to its achievement. Even up to our own day there have been those who have sought to follow this way. The regimen has consisted in meditation on Taoist truths, the cultivation of such Taoist attitudes as inaction and placidity, said to be characteristic of the Tao, carefully regulated breathing, diet, discipline, moral living, and partaking of substances supposed to prolong life, such as seeds and resin of evergreens like the pine and fir, products of such other trees and plants as the plum, and certain minerals and jewels—gold, jade, and the pearl. Yet along with the achievement of immortality has gone a belief in hells, derived from Buddhism. The hells, usually closely resembling their Buddhist prototypes, are often vividly depicted in Taoist temples and the ceremonies of the *tao shih* are supposed to be potent in obtaining the release from them of luckless souls.

Taoism, too, has its gods. Many of these it shares with the state cult, partly because some of them have come down from the remote past of China out of which both Taoism and the state religion arose. Its pantheon and iconography have been profoundly influenced by Buddhism. The Taoist gods may be honored in temples, the latter probably originally suggested by Buddhist shrines. The highest god of Taoism is usually said

to be Yii Huang ("The Jade Emperor" or, less accurately but more commonly in English, "The Pearly Emperor[7]") or Yii Huang Shang Ti. He has, indeed, been thought of by many of the masses as the supreme god of all the universe. The Taoists also have a trinity, the San Ch'ing ("The Three Pure Ones"), possibly suggested by the Buddhist trinities. The persons in this trinity may vary, as they do in those of Buddhism, being sometimes Lao Tzu, Yii Huang, and the ancient mythical ruler P'an Ku, or some other combination. Another Taoist trinity called the San Kuan ("The Three Rulers" or "The Three Officials") is variously said to be composed of Heaven, Earth, and Water, and of the three famous legendary (or perhaps mythical) rulers Yao, Shun, and